

Learning the basics



“How are my retired parents paying for their health care? What sort of coverage do they have?”

START HERE

It will be necessary to learn what kind of health coverage the person you care for already has. First, find out if the person currently has Medicare. If he or she does have Medicare, find out which parts of Medicare he or she has—Part A (hospital insurance), Part B (medical insurance), or Part D (prescription drug coverage). You will also want to find out whether the person is in Original Medicare, in a Medicare Advantage Plan (like an HMO or PPO), or in any other type of Medicare health plan. This information is on a person's Medicare card. If the Medicare card for the person you care for is not available for you to look at, you can either call Medicare together, or the person you care for can complete an authorization form to allow you to get Medicare information released to you. To get an authorization form, call Medicare at the telephone number listed below. If the person you care for does not currently have Medicare, find out when he or she will be eligible to enroll.

NOTE: It is essential to find out if the person you care for has other health coverage in addition to Medicare, such as a health plan with a former employer, Medicaid, or other insurance that can help pay for health care needs. If the person is enrolled in Original Medicare, also find out if he or she has a Medigap (Medicare Supplement Insurance) policy.

DID YOU KNOW? Medicaid isn't the same as Medicare. Medicaid is a joint Federal and state program that helps with medical costs for some people with limited income and resources. Medicaid programs vary from state to state. A person may have both Medicaid and Medicare.

BASIC INFORMATION

Medicare is health insurance for people age 65 or older, under age 65 with certain disabilities or ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or Lou Gehrig's disease), and any age with End-Stage Renal Disease (permanent kidney failure requiring dialysis or a kidney transplant).

GETTING MEDICARE: If the person you care for is turning age 65 and is already getting Social Security benefits, or if those benefits will start at age 65, he or she will be enrolled automatically in Medicare. A Medicare card will be mailed about three months before his or her 65th birthday. The card will show this person has **Part A** (hospital insurance) and **Part B** (medical insurance) coverage. Most people don't have to pay a monthly premium for Medicare Part A when they turn age 65 because they or a spouse paid Medicare taxes while they were working. Most people do pay a premium each month for Part B. Part B is optional. However, there may be a late enrollment penalty if the person you care for doesn't join when he or she is first eligible. For important information about enrolling in Part B, visit www.medicare.gov on the web and view a copy of “Medicare & You.” Under “Search Tools,” select “Find a Medicare Publication.” Or, you can contact your State Health Insurance Assistance Program (see page 6 for more information about this program).

If the person you care for isn't getting Social Security benefits when he or she turns age 65 (for example, if this person is still working), this person will have to sign up for Medicare. Call Social Security to find out more. To contact Social Security, see the “Find Out More” section below.

Your state has programs that pay some or all of the Medicare premiums for people with limited income and resources. Call your state's Medical Assistance (Medicaid) Office to learn about Medicare Savings Programs or visit www.medicare.gov on the web.

FIND OUT MORE

GET DETAILS

Medicare is here for you 24 hours a day, every day. Call 1-800-MEDICARE [1-800-633-4227]. TTY users should call 1-877-486-2048.

Look for detailed benefit information about Medicare at www.medicare.gov on the web. This website has a full range of Medicare information, including tools to

- compare health plan choices in your area.
- find a Medicare drug plan.
- find a doctor.

- find helpful telephone numbers and websites.
- get free copies of Medicare publications like “Medicare & You” and “Choosing a Medigap Policy: A Guide to Health Insurance for People with Medicare”. Under “Search Tools,” select “Find a Medicare Publication.”

To get a Medicare authorization form, call 1-800-MEDICARE [1-800-633-4227].

To sign up for Medicare Part A or Part B, call Social Security at 1-800-772-1213. Or, visit www.socialsecurity.gov on the web.

To find out about Medicare Savings Programs, call your state Medical Assistance (Medicaid) Office. You can get the telephone number from your local telephone directory or call 1-800-MEDICARE [1-800-633-4227]. TTY users should call 1-877-486-2048.

MEDICARE OPTIONS

Today's Medicare is about choice. Medicare gives people different ways to get Medicare benefits, as well as tools to help people with Medicare make the best choice.

Medicare has Part A (hospital insurance) and Part B (medical insurance). People with Part A or B can also enroll in Part D (Medicare prescription drug coverage). Medicare prescription drug coverage may help lower the person's prescription drug costs and help protect against higher costs in the future. See pages 10 and 11 for more information.

The **Original Medicare Plan** is a fee-for-service health plan that lets people with Medicare go to any doctor, hospital, or other health care provider who accepts Medicare. Medicare pays its share of an approved amount and the person with Medicare pays the rest, up to certain limits. People in the Original Medicare Plan must choose and join a Medicare Prescription Drug Plan if they want to get Medicare prescription drug coverage.

Medicare Advantage Plans such as **Medicare Health Maintenance Organization (HMO) Plans**, **Medicare Preferred Provider Organization (PPO) Plans**, **Medicare Private Fee-for-Service (PFFS) Plans**, **Medicare Special Needs Plans (SNPs)**, and **Medicare Medical Savings Account (MSA) Plans** are available in many areas of the country. If the person you care for joins one, he or she will get all Medicare-covered benefits through the plan.

If the person you care for joins a Medicare Advantage Plan, the plan will usually provide Medicare prescription drug coverage. A person who joins a Medicare Advantage plan does not need to (and is not allowed to) join a separate Medicare prescription drug plan.

MORE OPTIONS: **Medigap** (Medicare Supplement Insurance) **policies** are sold by private insurance companies to fill "gaps" in Original Medicare Plan coverage, such as out-of-pocket costs for Medicare coinsurance and deductibles, or for services not covered by Medicare. A Medigap policy only works with the Original Medicare Plan. If the person you care for joins a Medicare Advantage (MA) Plan, he or she generally doesn't need (and can't use) a Medigap policy.

MEDICARE PART A
(usually no premium)
helps pay for inpatient hospital care, skilled nursing facility care following a hospital stay, hospice care, and some home health care.

MEDICARE PART B
(premium) helps pay for doctors' services, outpatient hospital care, and some other medical services when they are medically necessary.

Not covered by Part A or Part B: long-term custodial care in a nursing home.

Snapshot of Coverage Under the Original Medicare Plan

| | Medicare Helps Pay * | Medicare Doesn't Pay |
|------------------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Chiropractic Services | ● | |
| Clinical Laboratory Services | ● | |
| Custodial Care | | ○ |
| Dental Care and Dentures** | | ○ |
| Diabetic Services/Supplies | ● | |
| Durable Medical Equipment | ● | |
| Health Care While Traveling Outside the U.S.** | | ○ |
| Home Health Services | ● | |
| Hospice Care | ● | |
| Hospital Stays | ● | |
| Kidney Dialysis Services and Supplies | ● | |
| Mental Health Care | ● | |
| Physical Therapy | ● | |
| Preventive Services | ● | |
| Routine Eye and Foot Care | | ○ |
| Skilled Nursing Facility Care | ● | |
| Urgently Needed Care | ● | |

The Original Medicare Plan typically covers 80 percent of the Medicare-approved amount. Additional conditions will apply.

* Certain limits and conditions may apply.

** Except in limited situations.

www.aoa.gov

The U.S. Administration on Aging site offers a wide variety of information for seniors and caregivers, including the Eldercare Locator.

www.eldercare.gov

Use the AoA Eldercare Locator to learn about private insurance, community programs, Medicaid, and your closest Area Agency on Aging (AAA) program. Or call 1-800-677-1116.

To find out which insurance companies sell Medigap policies in your area, visit

www.medicare.gov on the web. Under "Search Tools," select "Compare Health Plans and Medigap Policies in Your Area." Or, you can call your State Health Insurance Assistance Program (see page 23 for their telephone number).